The Committee recommended for reducing the customs duty on petrol/ diesel to 7.5% from 10% and shift over in the pricing basis to trade parity in the ratio of 80% import parity and 20% export parity. It also recommended restructuring of excise duty at specific rates on petrol/diesel to avoid cascading effect of increase in selling prices.

Based on the recommendations of Dr. Rangarajan Committee, the Government has reduced the customs duties on petrol & diesel to 7.5% and change in pricing basis to trade parity. These changes have been implemented w.e.f. 16.6.06. Further, Domestic LPG was made "Declared Goods' effective 20.4.2006 resulting in reduction in maximum sales tax to 4%.

Air travel LTC facilities to Government Servants

2696. SHRI MANOHAR JOSHI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have allowed a special dispensation for air travel to Government servants availing LTC to visit J and K State;

(b) whether this dispensation was intended as a past a Government plan to promote tourism in J and K State;

(c) whether Government have assessed the security threat posed to such tourists by the terrorist network in the State;

(d) if so, what steps have been taken for their security and protection; and

(e) whether Government are also considering offering similar dispensation to Government servants availing LTC to visit other parts of country?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) As a part of the Government's plan to revive tourism in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, all Group 'A' and 'B' Government servants were permitted to travel on LTC by Air Economy class in national carrier between New Delhi and Srinagar for a period of two years with effect from 16th June, 2004.

(c) and (d) The State Government and Security Forces, in an endeavour to make the security environment progressively safer for tourists, have taken the following steps:—

(i) A separate tourist police and enforcement wing exists at Srinagar/ Jammu and other tourist places, which looks after and protects the interests of the tourists in the State. The tourist police are

empowered to take cognizance in cases of cheating and harassment.

(ii) Adequate deployment of Security Forces/State Police is being ensured around the tourist spots and also roads leading to such places.

(iii) Regular patrolling and anti-sabotage checks are being undertaken in and around tourist places and roads leading there.

(iv) A separate security arrangement exists at the Shrine of Mata Vaishno Devi at Katra and its proximity, which is operational on a permanent basis.

(v) Special security arrangements have been made for the pilgrims visiting Shri Amarnath Ji cave, Pahalgam and Kheer Bhawani. Security Forces are ensuring a multi-tiered security system for the pilgrims.

Union Government provides necessary support to the State Government on request, and continuously monitors the security situation.

(e) No, Sir.

Development of village tourism

†2697. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have formulated any plan for the development of village tourism in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the States wherein this plan has been implemented by Government; and

(d) the villages in Goa and Maharashtra selected for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The creation of infrastructure in Rural areas having potential for tourism is being supported under the existing scheme of Product/ Infrastructure Development for Destination and Circuit of Ministry of Tourism, while community participation and the capacity building including skill up gradation in such rural areas are being supported through GOI-UNDP

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.